

REC'D APR 15 2004

1. Explain your view of the role of a State Transportation Commissioner.

ANSWER:

My view is that a State Transportation Commissioner serves two equally important roles:

1. working consultatively with the other Commissioners, and with Legislators and the Department to develop and implement responsible transportation planning for the State of Michigan as a whole consistent with policies developed as a Commission and
2. continuing to inform oneself individually from all sources regarding the technical, geographical, social and fiscal demands, changes and influences affecting policy and implementation.

2. How do you believe the State Transportation Commission should interact with MDOT, the Legislature and the Executive Office?

ANSWER:

I have a lot to learn about this important context of interaction. Presently, from working on our Township Road Committee and our Township Board as a Trustee, and from some experiences lobbying for federal funding for roads and rail, my observation is that the Transportation Commission must consult with MDOT, the Legislature, and the Executive Office and attribute weight to the views of each of them. Beyond that, however, I think the Commission has a duty to make its own decisions following full consultation.

3. What initiatives could enhance or increase road funding in each of the following three areas:
at the local level?
at the state level?
at the federal level?

ANSWER:

I have attended one meeting as a Commissioner, and look forward to attending a second one April 29, so I am learning about initiatives on the State and Federal levels such as diesel tax equity and the redirection of funds, but I think I need to learn a lot more about funding history and mechanisms to become familiar with the different funding levels before I can express an opinion on these questions.

4. Should the current funding formula in PA 51 of 1951 be changed?
If so, how?

ANSWER:

While the funding formula of PA 51 may be awkward and anachronistic, the real question is under what circumstances can we bring PA 51's formula up to date? The answer seems to be when we have determined the long-range plan to guide a new formula.

In this context, I have been reviewing the recommendations coming out of the Summit's Funding Action Team.

Michigan needs to reexamine our long-range plans and policies including shifts in population centers, changes in fuels, and changing transportation technology. Then, more informed we can engage in discussions about whether and/or what changes need to be made to the formula.

5. What is your view on the current level of funding for statewide transit systems in Michigan? Is it satisfactory? If not, provide an explanation of how it should be restructured.

ANSWER:

One working definition of "transit" is: Conveyance of people or goods from one place to another, especially on a local public transportation system, so I infer that "transit" has a contextual meaning different from or a subset of "transportation" overall. As an end-user I have my own experiences and observations of "transit" in Michigan. However, should my nomination be approved I would want to keep my eyes and ears open and my mouth shut for a while to learn as much as possible about these issues from my colleagues on the Commission who are much more experienced than I on these rather precise questions.

That said, my impression – and that's all it is – is that statewide transit in Michigan has deteriorated in scope, availability and variety of service. Whether that is the result of funding inadequacy, or policy shifts, or a sign of technology moving elsewhere, I am not certain.

That means I will need to learn a lot more before I can answer this question with better facts.

6. How much funding (percentage or dollar amount) should be allocated to each of the following areas:
congestion relief and new road projects;
repair of existing roads;
research into safety, new materials and technology?

ANSWER:

As I understand the basic economics of investment from my private experience, protecting and preserving existing highway and rail through placing a priority on their repair first, make sense. This is also a safety issue. Congestion relief and repair are essentially safety-driven issues. Once repair of the existing system is funded, we need to look at responsible prioritization based upon what areas provide most benefit, examining congestion relief, economic development, technology and population.

Again, not having the knowledge of serving on the Commission long and other variables such as not knowing what the State will receive in Federal Reauthorization monies, I would not be able to put specific percentages or dollar amounts at this time

7. In 1997, the Commission adopted a goal of 95% of freeways and 85% of non-freeways in good condition by 2006. The Commission also adopted a goal of 95% of freeway bridges and 85% of non-freeway bridges in good condition by 2008. Should these system condition goals be increased, decreased or remain the same? Please explain.

ANSWER:

Without having the data on which the Commission based its goals in 1997, I am reluctant to comment on the numbers in a vacuum. Other questions need to be answered. I think it's good to have goals that ensure our bridges and freeways are safe. It's also important to have a strong priority to protect our investments.

8. What do you think about the Granholm Administration's decision to defer 34 capacity improvement road projects in 2003?

ANSWER:

I regarded this decision as dictated by meeting condition goals under economic constraints across the board. Fiscal responsibility is a major responsibility of every administration regardless of politics.

9. After getting pressure from the legislature, the Granholm administration eventually restored 17 of the deferred projects. What do you think about MDOT's plan that the remaining 17 deferred projects will not be reinstated until all of the following are met: confidence that proposed investments will meet 2007 condition goals; confidence that investments will sustain preservation goals beyond 2007; and additional federal revenue.

ANSWER:

Without changes in the present demands on Michigan's economy and without improvement in the national economy overall, fiscal responsibility remains a major concern requiring accountability in these decisions. Congestion relief does not seem to present solely a question of roads and bridges alone. It seems that congestion relief also requires examining other forms of transport that impact our road system less. Availability of air transport, for example, already provides significant congestion relief in certain areas.

10. Should MDOT utilize private contractors? If yes, on what type of projects or operations? If no, why not?

ANSWER:

Generally, I believe history demonstrates that public projects should be performed by public workers because of visibility, transparency, accountability and economic good sense: we do recognize that public and private input brings strength.

11. What do you think about the concept of context sensitive solutions (or design) and road construction?

ANSWER:

This is a challenging area and I look forward to working with the Department to identify projects that could be feasible.

12. The state has lost approximately one general aviation airport per year in the last twenty years. What do you believe can be done by MDOT to attract and sustain airports and airlines in Michigan?

ANSWER:

With the same disclaimer and intent with which I answered #5 above, I will want to learn more about the causes producing reduction in the number of general aviation airports. As an end-user of general aviation services I recognize their unique niche in transportation and would want to see those services survive. By the same token, I am aware that deregulation of commercial air carriers along with their losses and difficulties in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks have produced cutbacks in commercial air travel. Further, safety is always an issue with aviation use and its image with users.

From my observations of other states, commercial and general aviation airports, what enhances air travel and airport use of both sorts is accessibility, both easy means to access the airport and easy, transparent means to reach an end destination from the airport. Atlanta is an excellent example in that one can travel directly from Hartsfield, one of the busiest airports in the world, by intuitive affordable public transit to many business destinations – Buckhead, Decatur, Peachtree Center - without difficulty.

13. As research into alternative fuels advances, what should the state do to ensure a viable user fee collection system to offset declining gasoline tax revenues?

ANSWER:

I believe the Commission and the Department need to stay on top of the research into alternative fuels, technology affecting transport requirements, and user patterns while working with the auto, aviation, shipping and rail industries.

**State Transportation Commission Questions and Answers
For Vincent J. Brennan April 15, 2004**

1. Explain your view of the role of a State Transportation Commissioner

The Commission is created by statute which defines the role and the power of the Commission. As commissioner I will carry out the duties and role as defined by the statute.

2. How do you believe the State Transportation Commission should interact with MDOT, the Legislature and the Executive Office?

I believe the Commission should consider points from all the above. Each entity has say in policy and direction of MDOT. The Commission must then weigh all positions when making policy decisions.

3. What initiatives could enhance or increase road funding in each of the following three areas?
At the local level?
At the state level?
At the federal level?

I understand the main mechanisms for funding transportation, but would like to have a better depth of understanding before making broad policy recommendations.

4. Should the current funding formula in PA 51 of 1951 be changed?

I know the Act 51 Committee in 1998 looked at current formula and devised an asset management process as a better way to allocate funding. I'm interested in learning more about that process. I want to rely on the current funding formula at least until I've learned enough to form an opinion to recommend anything different.

5. What is your view on the current level of funding for statewide transit systems in Michigan/ Is it satisfactory? If not, provide an explanation of how it should be restructured.

I look forward to working with Commissioners and the transit industry to learn about transit systems and funding to give an informed opinion.

I believe transit enhances commerce and industry by allowing more workers in the state to get to work. Transit also improves the quality of life for a number of our citizens, so I have an interest in seeing that transit is adequately funded.

6. How much funding (% or \$\$) should be allocated to each of the following areas:
- Congestion relief and new roads;
 - Repair of existing roads
 - Research into safety, new materials & technology

The Governor's Fix it First policy is practical and makes sense. Repairing bridges and roads is not only necessary but essential for safety and quality of life for our citizens and visitors. I am interested in helping commerce grow in the State. Commerce includes better roads for tourism and business. Relieving congestion helps make the state more efficient and attractive to business and helps enhance the quality of life for our citizens, so it must also be addressed. New projects and R&D all make sense and must be looked at and supported as resources allow.

7. In 1997, the Commission adopted a goal of 95% of freeways and 85% of non-freeways in good condition by 2006. The Commission also adopted a goal of 95% of freeway bridges and 85% of non-freeway bridges in good condition by 2008. Should these system condition goals be increased, decreased or remain the same?

Remain the same. I would love to see 100% of the system in good condition, but long term goals must align with resources available. I would defer to previous reviews of the goals and look toward revisiting them after federal reauthorization is complete.

8. What do you think about the Granholm Administration's decision to defer 34 capacity improvement road projects in 2003? Support as part of Fix it First.

I am not intimate with the facts surrounding the decision so it is unfair for me to opine on the merits of the decision.

9. After getting pressure from the legislature, the Granholm administration eventually restored 17 of the deferred projects. What do you think about MDOT's plan that the remaining 17 deferred projects will not be reinstated until all of the following are met: confidence that the proposed investments will meet 2007 condition goals; confidence that investments will sustain preservation goals beyond 2007; and additional federal revenue.

I am not familiar with all of the facts surrounding the above projects, however it seems practical that we utilize our limited resources on fixing roads and bridges that are unsafe and in disrepair and that we continue to focus on achieving existing goals.

10. Should MDOT utilize private contractors? If yes, on what type of projects or operations? If no, why not?

Yes, MDOT should use private contractors as I understand is the current practice. However, if there are instances where it can be done less expensive internally with the same level of expertise then obviously the work should be done by MDOT personnel.

11. What do you think about the concept of context sensitive solutions (or design) and road construction?

I think it is generally a good idea as long as it is also fiscally prudent.

12. The state has lost approximately one general aviation airport per year in the last 20 years. What do you believe can be done by MDOT to attract and sustain airports and airlines in Michigan?

I'm not aware how MDOT interfaces with airlines/businesses. To the extent that MDOT can enhance opportunities for airlines/airports to provide consumers and business with competitive pricing and more services, MDOT should work w/Aeronautics Commission to encourage such.

13. As research into alternative fuels advances, what should the state do to ensure a viable user fee collection system to offset declining gasoline tax revenues?

As transportation fuels progress from petroleum based fuels to alternate fuels, the state needs to enact policies to capture lost revenues.